| 1 | IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT |
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| 2 | FOR THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS |
| 3 | SONYA LARSON, |
| 4 |) Plaintiff) |
| 5 | -VS-) CA No. 19-10203-IT |
| 6 | DAWN DORLAND PERRY, et al,) |
| 7 | Defendants) |
| 8 | |
| 9 | MOTION HEARING BY TELEPHONE |
| 10 | BEFORE THE HONORABLE MARIANNE B. BOWLER UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE |
| 11 | UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE UUDGE |
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| 15 | United States District Court 1 Courthouse Way |
| 16 | Boston, Massachusetts 02210 May 14, 2021, 2:30 p.m. |
| 17 | May 14, 2021, 2.30 p.m. |
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| 22 | LEE A. MARZILLI |
| 23 | OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER United States District Court |
| 24 | 1 Courthouse Way, Room 7200 Boston, MA 02210 |
| 25 | leemarz@aol.com |
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APPEARANCES:
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          ANDREW D. EPSTEIN, ESQ., Barker, Epstein & Loscocco,
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     176 Federal Street, Suite 502, Boston, Massachusetts, 02110,
     for the Plaintiff.
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          SUZANNE M. ELOVECKY, ESQ., Partridge Snow & Hahn,
     30 Federal Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02110, for the
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     Defendants.
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     ALSO PRESENT: Stella Oyalabu, Esq.
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1 PROCEEDINGS 2 THE CLERK: Do we have all the counsel who are 3 going to be arguing this motion? 4 MS. ELOVECKY: There's one other counsel of 5 record, Matthew Greene, who represents defendants Jeffrey Cohen and the Cohen Business Law Group, but he doesn't have 6 7 a motion on for today, and I'm not sure he planned to weigh in. 9 THE CLERK: Okay, great. 10 MS. OYALABU: I'm here, Stella Oyalabu on behalf 11 of Cohen Business Group and Jeffrey Cohen. MS. ELOVECKY: Stella, can I just ask, do you have 12 13 a notice of appearance on the docket? 14 MS. OYALABU: No, I do not. 15 MS. ELOVECKY: Could I just get the spelling of 16 your name? 17 MS. OYALABU: Yes. My last name is spelled 18 O-y-a-l-a-b-u; Stella is spelled S-t-e-l-l-a. 19 MS. ELOVECKY: Thank you. 20 THE COURT: Good afternoon. Do we have everyone? 21 THE CLERK: Judge, this is the Clerk. We do have 22 everyone. 23 THE COURT: We do have everyone and the Court 24 Reporter? 25 THE CLERK: Yes.

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              THE COURT: All right, then you can call the case.
              THE CLERK: Okay. This is the United States District
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     Court for the District of Massachusetts which is now in
     session, the Honorable Marianne B. Bowler presiding. This is
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     the case of Larson v. Perry, et al, Civil Action No. 19-10203.
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              Please be advised that any recording or rebroadcasting
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     of court proceedings is prohibited and may result in sanctions
     as deemed appropriate or necessary by the Court.
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              Would counsel starting with plaintiff's counsel please
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     identify themselves for the record.
              MR. EPSTEIN: Thank you. Good afternoon, your Honor.
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     This is Andrew Epstein representing Sonya Larson.
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              THE COURT: Thank you.
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              MS. ELOVECKY: Good afternoon, your Honor. This is
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     Suzanne Elovecky representing Dawn Dorland Perry.
              THE COURT: Thank you.
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              Well, we're here for the hearing -- who else?
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              MS. OYALABU: Good afternoon, your Honor. This is
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     Stella Oyalabu representing Cohen Business Law Group and
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     Jeffrey Cohen, and we have no position in this matter, this
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     motion.
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              THE COURT: Thank you. All right, we're here for a
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     hearing on two motions, Docket Entry 106 and Docket Entry 110,
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     so I'll take them in that order. I remind you, Counsel, we
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     have until 2:30. I have a criminal matter at that time, and
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because of the time slot at the prison, I have to be prompt.

So on Perry's motion to compel.

MS. ELOVECKY: Thank you, your Honor. She does go by Dawn Dorland in her professional capacity, so that's the name we tend to use in this matter.

So this is Suzanne Elovecky on behalf of Dawn Dorland and in support of Dawn Dorland's motion to compel. We filed this motion to compel in March of 2021, more than six months after initially serving requests for production on the plaintiff and defendant in counterclaim, Sonya Larson. This motion to compel was filed to seek the production, a meaningful production of documents after an initial production was provided that clearly fell short of the obligations imposed by the rules.

In response to the motion, there have been several arguments raised about whether or not any productions or further productions are required in this matter due to the fact that Ms. Larson has the position that she received a total of \$425 for the story at issue, and therefore that is the sole value of this matter. However, that is not the only claim at issue. There are copyright claims at issue, and my client, Ms. Dorland, is also defending against tort claims. This is a much broader issue than just a \$425 dispute. This also is an intellectual property dispute, which may not be quantifiable at this time but obviously has a lot of inherent value that goes

beyond a dollar figure.

I think it's also very interesting that while advancing an argument about proportionality, Ms. Larson is serving a second set of production requests and also advancing her own motion to compel.

Now, what remains most troubling about Ms. Larson's production is the apparent lack of involvement of counsel, and that was from the time that the requests were first served in August all the way through at least the first production in January. Many responses to inquiries about the scope of the production, the scope of search terms used, any inquiry into the process that resulted in the initial incomplete production was met with answers like, "Well, I don't know. I just sent the requests to my client and had her search for things." And that really causes a complete lack of confidence in what took place here and in what's been provided. There are —

THE COURT: May I interrupt you for just a moment because, I mean, I've read the papers, so I know the background. But, you know, it appears to me in reading it that the document production is more or less complete at this point, except possibly for the documents regarding the NEA award. So let's kind of go through what it is that you don't have and parse that through to see if we could get this resolved.

MS. ELOVECKY: All right. I mean, I do think that in some ways, we're at a bit of a disadvantage because you don't

know what you don't have when it's a negative, but I do have some items here that I have identified where I have concerns where I believe that there's more outstanding. One is that the production to date has had very little in regards to Facebook posts or Facebook communications, where the documents that have been provided to date actually indicate that there potentially were Facebook posts of the story at issue and concerning my client in a way that would be relevant to this matter, so that's one item that we're still looking for.

Another is that in --

THE COURT: Well, let's just take one at a time. Let's hear from the other side.

MS. ELOVECKY: Okay.

MR. EPSTEIN: I am unaware of any Facebook posts that Sonya Larson made. If she made any, we will be happy to produce them. I believe -- and, Sonya, you can answer this question if you're on the line -- I believe you're on the line, are you not?

MS. LARSON: Yes, I am.

MR. EPSTEIN: Oh, okay, that's all we need you to say. Thank you. But if there are Facebook posts mentioning "The Kindest" or Dawn Dorland, I'm going to encourage you to look for them and get them to me, and I will produce them. We've already agreed to produce the NEA documents, so that's really a nonissue.

1 THE COURT: All right, so all Facebook posts will be 2 produced. 3 MS. ELOVECKY: Okay, the next -- shall I go on, your Honor? 4 5 THE COURT: Yes, please. 6 MS. ELOVECKY: Okay. The next item is text messages. 7 Now, several text messages were produced; that is for sure. There were three documents that were produced that appeared to 8 be the result of searches, and the titles of the documents were 10 versions of my client's name; but by seeing the titles of those documents, it appears that only three search terms were used 11 for text messages. One was "Dawn," I think one was "Dorland," 12 13 and one was a nickname that's been assigned to her by the 14 plaintiff and her cohort. And the way that those were produced 15 is that only the line where the search hit appeared is present on this single PDF, which makes it so that the production is 16 essentially nonsensical. So, in my view, the production of 17 18 text messages was incomplete based on the search terms, and the 19 format of the production was not useful and was not produced in 20 the ordinary course. That's not the way text messages are maintained. I understand the way text chains work. I saw the 21 22 discussion that was in Attorney Epstein's papers, but there's 23 ways to do this that is useful --24 THE COURT: Just a moment. I mean, have you sat down 25 and had a meet-and-confer and asked opposing counsel to use the

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     certain search terms that were not included in the first
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     search?
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              MS. ELOVECKY: Your Honor, we had a meet-and-confer in
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     January that was followed up with several emails, and when I
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     asked questions about search terms, I was shut down completely.
     So, yes, we had a meet-and-confer. No, there was not a
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     discussion about search terms.
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              THE COURT: Well, how many search terms do you want?
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              MS. ELOVECKY: So the ones of my client's name are
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     sufficient. I think the only others that we would look for
     would be "The Kindest" and "kidney."
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              THE COURT: All right, can we do a search with those
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     terms?
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              MR. EPSTEIN: Absolutely, your Honor.
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              THE COURT: All right.
              MR. EPSTEIN: I believe we've already done it for "The
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     Kindest," which is the name of the story. I'm not sure we've
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     done it for "kidney," although I did put in one of my
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     memorandums the search terms that Ms. Larson used. I don't
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     remember if "kidney" was one of them, but I am happy to have
     her go back and look for "kidney" as one of the search terms
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     for text messages.
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              THE COURT: All right, next item?
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              MS. ELOVECKY: Well, your Honor, the rest of the text
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     message issue is the format of the search hits and the fact
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that the conversations are really not present. It's only the very line with the search hit. So I think that that production should be supplemented so that the actual discussion that contains the text message is readable.

THE COURT: Well, again, at your meet-and-confer, did you ask your brother for this?

MS. ELOVECKY: Again, your Honor, we had a discussion that was very much one-sided, and at the time of our meet-and-confer, these documents had not yet been produced. These documents were produced after the -- well, I received these documents after the opposition to my motion was filed. I note that Attorney Epstein mailed it sooner than that, and his tracking information shows that it was delivered the day before I received it, but that was still two weeks after the motion was filed.

THE COURT: All right, go on.

MS. ELOVECKY: The other category of documents is that in Ms. Larson's reply brief, she mentioned emails that she has that she has not yet produced and offers to produce in her briefing but has not yet produced. I don't have other specific categories of documents because I can't know what she has without having it. And, again, I have not had any assurance, and I think we've seen that even in this hearing thus far, that there has been much oversight in this process of document searching and collection. The fact that Facebook posts have

not yet been reviewed, searched, and produced, to me is part of this problem.

THE COURT: All right. Mr. Epstein?

MR. EPSTEIN: There are 15 documents that my client has revealed that she has. One is the NEA grant information which we've already agreed to produce. So the 14 other documents, the first one includes emails with her parents. You know, her parents are obviously going to be, "Oh, poor Sonya," you know, "we're behind you a hundred percent," and if you want us to produce them, we're happy to produce them.

THE COURT: Do you want them?

MS. ELOVECKY: Emails with her parents were already produced, and that actually wasn't the tone in those emails, so the answer is "yes."

THE COURT: All right.

MR. EPSTEIN: They will be produced. One document is a document with Eve -- I don't remember her last name, but she's the founder and director of GrubStreet, which is Sonya Larson's employer. That should be produced because it was requested by subpoena, but we will be happy to produce the emails. I think there is one or two emails, or however many emails -- I don't want to quantify it -- but we will produce those emails. There are three emails from people offering Sonya some emotional support. Again, we will produce those. An email from someone who's contacted by Dawn Dorland, we'll

produce that document. An email to someone saying that Sonya

Larson could not attend an event that she said she was going to
go to because of the time constraints of this ongoing dispute.

If that's relevant, we'll be happy to produce that.

An email from someone asking Sonya for -- she said to me legal advice. I don't know what kind of legal advice they were asking from Sonya Larson, but maybe Sonya has become an expert in certain aspects of law just on the basis of this litigation. You know, if that could be relevant, we'll produce it.

Two emails from Ms. Larson who was looking for a lawyer to represent her before I got involved in this action. I'm not sure that's attorney-client privilege. I'm not sure how relevant it is. You know, I was chosen to represent her. I'd prefer not to have that one produced, so I'm going to respectfully suggest that we not produce that unless the Court orders otherwise.

And then an email from someone who is writing a blog post about "The Kindest." I don't know what that was. Again, I have not seen that particular document, but it certainly is a category of a document that exists; and, you know, if it helps to resolve this discovery dispute, we will produce it.

THE COURT: All right, next category?

MS. ELOVECKY: Those are my categories of documents, your Honor. I do have my arguments concerning my Rule 37

request.

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THE COURT: All right, I'll hear you.

MS. ELOVECKY: Okay, pursuant to Rule 37, I believe that this is a case where sanctions are warranted. These requests were served in August of 2019. I understand, and I have stated in I believe all of my briefings, and I understood and was rather flexible during the fall concerning certain medical issues being experienced by both Ms. Larson and Attorney Epstein. I haven't raised that as a point of contention, but when we got to December and January and we had to push for documents, we had to do that. And documents were not produced until January. At that time, we had a meet-and-confer by telephone with multiple follow-ups via email. Via email, I asked Attorney Epstein for responses. stated that there was no need for further productions because of the low value of this case. When I reminded him of his claims against my client, he stated -- and I included this in my papers as an exhibit -- he stated, "No. Those claims are mine to prove, " somehow suggesting that I'm not entitled to documents related to his claims against my client.

At that point it was clear that we were hitting up against discovery deadlines, we were trying to schedule depositions, but I didn't have the documents I needed. I let counsel know that I was going to be moving ahead with this motion, but it wasn't until I said, "I'm filing the motion

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     tomorrow," that Attorney Epstein said, "Oh, Sonya Larson said
     she found more documents." We had no choice but to proceed
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    because we had a deadline with the discovery period and with
     depositions, and there was no indication that these documents
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     would be forthcoming within that time period. So we filed our
     motion, and almost two weeks after the filing, we had over 500
     documents, all of them highly relevant, at least a vast
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     majority of them highly relevant, including statements about
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     the use of my client's letter in Ms. Larson's story -- by
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     Ms. Larson these statements were made -- and that was all
     produced approximately two weeks after the motion was filed.
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     Under Rule 37, this is a basis for sanctions. We had both
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     opportunities and attempts to confer. Significant time was
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     permitted well beyond deadlines. This was not a trigger-finger
     reaction.
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              THE COURT: All right, Mr. Epstein, as to the
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     documents that we have gone through and that you have agreed to
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    be produced, can we have a time frame?
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              MR. EPSTEIN: It's May 14. Certainly by the end of
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     the month.
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              THE COURT: All right. And we've covered all
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     categories; am I correct?
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              MS. ELOVECKY: All of the categories that I am aware
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     of, your Honor.
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              THE COURT: All right, the motion is allowed as to the
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production, and the documents that we've talked about will be produced by the end of May. As to the motion for sanctions, it's denied without prejudice. It can be renewed at the end of the case. All right, moving on to Docket Entry No. 110, emergency motion to compel answers to interrogatories and for production of documents. MR. EPSTEIN: Okay, thank you, your Honor. I'm just fumbling through papers, and I appreciate you allowing me a few seconds to move some papers around on my desk. THE COURT: But please note that I do have a criminal matter at 2:30. So we tried to focus this. MR. EPSTEIN: Oh. sure Ms. Elovecky has spent almost as much time as I have. I have logged, and I'm almost embarrassed to say, 584 hours on this case already. THE COURT: All right, what I want to focus on is by category what you want and what you don't have. MR. EPSTEIN: I would like the interrogatories that we sent out in response to the counterclaim to be answered. want to know Ms. Dorland's claim to be a writer and an editor and a teacher. What has she written? What did she teach? would like --THE COURT: Okay, so let's go through the

interrogatories that you're not satisfied with one by one.

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              MR. EPSTEIN: So we're looking for answers to what
     she's written, what she teaches and --
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              THE COURT: No, please, so that the record is clear,
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     what interrogatory are we talking about?
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              MR. EPSTEIN: This is Interrogatory No. 1, your Honor.
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     I'm sorry.
              THE COURT: All right, what's your objection?
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              MS. ELOVECKY: Your Honor, my objection is that
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     Interrogatory No. 1, first of all, is very vague and ambiguous.
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     It is almost an entire page in and of itself, and it's not
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     broken up in subparts. It's also asking for information that
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     is completely irrelevant to this matter. My client's career is
     not on trial here. What she has written, what she hasn't
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     written, where she has taught, how she taught, none of that is
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     at all relevant to a copyright infringement issue, to tort
     claims, or to anything else at issue in this case; and to me
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     and to the way that it appears in this interrogatory, it is
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     designed as nothing but an attempt to harass and embarrass my
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     client. She does not have the same level of publications as
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     Sonya Larson, which is something that has been paraded through
     every version of the complaint in a derogatory and demeaning
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     way, and that is all that this interrogatory is looking to
     continue.
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              THE COURT: Overruled. The response to 1 is to be
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     produced.
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Moving on, Mr. Epstein?

MR. EPSTEIN: Interrogatory No. 2 is looking for whether she's written about kidney donations, anything to do with a kidney donation. And one of things that I mentioned in my brief is that it goes to the fair use defense as to the market value of her 2015 Facebook letter, and I quoted Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music, which is the Supreme Court case that talks about the fact that market value is one of those important things that could be considered in a fair use defense.

So we need to know what Ms. Dorland has written about kidneys or kidney donations. What has she done with her 2015 letter? As far as we can see, she's done very little with it, if anything at all, other than to make postings on Facebook.

THE COURT: What's your response?

MS. ELOVECKY: We answered Interrogatory No. 2. We answered it in full. I don't understand why this is in a motion, why we're being forced to spend attorneys' fees on arguing over something that's been answered.

THE COURT: All right, Mr. Epstein, your sister says she's responded. What else is it you're looking for?

MR. EPSTEIN: All I'm looking for is a statement that Ms. Dorland has not written anything about kidney donations other than what she's posted on her Facebook pages, both the private ones and the public ones.

THE COURT: All right, can we get that in affidavit

form?

MS. ELOVECKY: Well, your Honor, that's not what the request asked for, but, yes, we can. I mean, the answer said that what she has done with the letter is to send it to the administrators at the hospital where she donated her kidney. That's what she said she did; that's what she did. If she had done something else, it would be in this interrogatory answer.

THE COURT: All right, I'm satisfied with that.

Moving on to the next one, Mr. Epstein.

MR. EPSTEIN: Well, given the time constraints, I'm going to skip over the members of the supposedly private and secret Facebook group. There are --

THE COURT: Are you waiving that?

MR. EPSTEIN: No, I'm not. We'd like to know who's on there. Ms. Larson believes that she saw up to 250 people who were on the Facebook group, and Ms. Dorland claims that there are only a handful, 25 or 30 people in the Facebook group. It shows how widely disseminated this letter really was, that there have been redacted pages from the Facebook production that Ms. Dorland produced; and if we get rid of the deletions and redactions, we'll see exactly how many people were on the Facebook post at that time. I just would like to see the unredacted copies of the Facebook pages that were produced.

MS. ELOVECKY: May I respond, your Honor?

THE COURT: Yes, please.

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MS. ELOVECKY: Okay, that actually is inaccurate. The redactions from the Facebook pages were made to protect Ms. Dorland's Facebook friends that are not in the group. we produced documents back in June and July of 2020, we produced documents that were complete from the Facebook group. Attorney Epstein does have some confusion about Facebook, and it might be that he's not a frequent Facebook user, but Ms. Dorland had the Facebook account which results in a Facebook wall. Everyone who has a Facebook account has one. She had some postings there. She also had a private and secret group, which is what it is you hear and what's the requests we're speaking to and what's the interrogatories they're speaking to. All of the redactions concerned friends and their information and comment who were not in the group but that Facebook populated along the margins of Ms. Dorland's Facebook when she was creating the production. That's what the redactions were.

Concerning the number of people, which is what

Attorney Epstein claims is most important to him that were in

the Facebook group, Ms. Dorland submitted an affidavit that

clearly spelled out under oath the number of people and the

time periods. The identity of those people, I do not see the

relevance. Attorney Epstein admitted in his papers that he has

no intent to contact them. I just do not see where the

identity of the people is all that relevant to this case, if at

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     all.
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              Further, in the documents that we did produce,
     nobody's identity other than the recipient of a kidney, which
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     is medical information, nobody else's identity was redacted for
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     purposes of hiding anything. Ms. Dorland doesn't have records
     and cannot create from Facebook a record that shows the
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     timeline of entries and exits from the group. It does not
     exist, and I've stated this via email and otherwise to
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     Attorney Epstein. So I'm really, as far as listing the
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     members, I don't -- I'm sorry?
              THE COURT: Hello? Are you there?
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              MS. ELOVECKY: Hi. This is Suzanne.
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              THE COURT: Are you there?
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              MS. ELOVECKY: Yes.
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              MR. EPSTEIN: Judge Bowler, are you there?
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              THE COURT: I'm here, yes.
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              MR. EPSTEIN: Okay.
              MS. ELOVECKY: Did I get cut off?
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              THE COURT: I think momentarily you did. All right,
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     given the hour, what is your availability for a hearing on
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     Monday to continue this?
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              MR. EPSTEIN: I'm not available on Monday, your Honor.
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     I'm available anytime the rest of the week.
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              MS. ELOVECKY: And I have availability every afternoon
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     next week.
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THE COURT: All right, let me just look at the
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     calendar here. Oh, I'm emergency judge, so it's a busy, busy
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     week. And, Mr. Epstein, you have no availability on Monday; am
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     I correct?
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              MR. EPSTEIN: I have to be in Newton in the morning,
     and I have a dental appointment that is a year and a half in
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     the making, your Honor, at 2:00 o'clock. I could go to my
     office at 3:00 o'clock. I suppose I could be available at that
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     time.
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              THE COURT: Well, why don't I put it down for 3:15,
     give you a little bit more time.
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              MR. EPSTEIN: That's great.
              THE COURT: And if you're late, well, just call in and
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     hang on, and we'll start a little late.
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              MR. EPSTEIN: It's only a cleaning, your Honor, so it
     shouldn't take more than a half an hour, 45 minutes maximum.
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              THE COURT: Well, I had that yesterday for the first
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     time in two years.
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              MR. EPSTEIN: The same problem that I had, your Honor.
              THE COURT: All right. Well, we'll suspend, and I
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     will talk to you on Monday.
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              MR. EPSTEIN: Thank you very much, your Honor.
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              THE COURT: All right.
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              MS. ELOVECKY: Thanks, your Honor.
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              MS. OYALABU: Thank you, your Honor.
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(Adjourned, 2:29 p.m.)
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                        C E R T I F I C A T E
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 4
     UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT )
 5
     DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS
                                   ) ss.
     CITY OF BOSTON
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              I, Lee A. Marzilli, Official Federal Court Reporter,
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     do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript, Pages 1
     through 22 inclusive, was recorded by me stenographically at
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11
     the time and place aforesaid in Civil Action No. #, # v. NAME,
     and thereafter by me reduced to typewriting and is a true and
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13
     accurate record of the proceedings.
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              Dated this 30th day of May, 2021.
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19
                   /s/ Lee A. Marzilli
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                   LEE A. MARZILLI, CRR
                   OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER
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